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ABSTRACT

This program, included in "Effective Reading Programs...," has as its principal objective the improvement of the educational expertise of elementary teachers, particularly in reading and language arts. All of the 12 elementary schools in Southampton County are involved in the program. The two important components of the program are (1) survey and evaluation and (2) inservice training. Standardized tests are used to assess the reading potential and achievement of each child. This information enables teachers to plan instruction to meet the needs of each student. Inservice training is ongoing and includes summer workshops, weekly two-hour meetings with consultants, and graduate level courses for all program teachers. Consultants visit classrooms, give demonstrations of materials and techniques, and conduct inservice training sessions. Training emphasizes diagnostic techniques, methods for individualizing instruction, and utilization of teacher-made reading materials. The program does not designate specific materials for teachers to use in reading instruction but rather seeks to improve the techniques and flexibility of teachers. (WR)

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# ENRICHMENT: THE ROAD TO READING

A description of the Coordinated Reading Improvement Program in Southampton County.

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## Preface

The ability to read, and to read well, is receiving unbelievable attention from all those interested in the education of youth. Efforts range from the national "Right to Read" programs and vast expenditures of Federal funds to more local emphasis such as the recently held "Governor's Conference on Reading" here in Virginia. Most efforts call for either more specialized reading teachers, or new commercially prepared materials, or a combination of both, resulting in huge monetary expenditures that apparently, if one is to judge from the published State Reading Test scores, are not really solving the problem. What does a school division do in the face of this dilemma, when funds for specialized teachers and massive armys of materials are not available and, if they were, no assurance that the goal of reading skill improvement would be met?

Southampton County, as most school divisions, faced the problem of disillusioned teachers, handicapped readers, and declining reading scores. The leadership in this division, however, sought a different approach and, as this article describes in developmental and sequential fashion, embarked upon a long-range program with results that indicate the reading improvement that followed.

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Southampton County Coordinated Reading Improvement Program

Overview

Reading as a tool for learning has always been given a position of great importance in the formal education of youth in this country. This strong emphasis has not been without good reason for not only is this skill of vital importance in communication but it is a difficult skill to master. The value of reading is obvious, as exemplified through such needs as the early and continued use of reading for vocational and professional competence in all fields, the need for reading for keeping informed, and the use of reading for recreatory and therapeutic programs. Proper and full utilization of this complex skill is attained only through a thorough and clear instructional program.

Authorities have long decried the failure of a great number of pupils to learn to read, as evidenced by the large amount of literature in the field. As long as thirty-five years ago, Stratton, writing in the 17th Yearbook of the National Elementary Principal, lamented that the amount and quality of the reading done by children and adults in general was disappointedly low. Through the years, a host of authorities have pointed out that teachers everywhere are confronted with the problems of teaching reading. Betts, Bond, Gates, Durrell, Gray, and Kottmeyer, to name but a few, have pointed out that the teacher of reading has a formidable task. Not only must he have thoroughly mastered and understood the reading process but he must be prepared to interpret this process to each and every child, attempting to adopt the process to each individual's own capabilities. That teachers do not always master this technique, thereby increasing greatly the complexity of reading to the child, is given by Gates as one of the major causes why children fail to succeed in learning to read. Another writer, Fernald, goes further and emphasizes that many children fail to learn to read because

the methods used by the schools actually prevent them from doing so.

The reading problems that exist in the Southampton County Public Schools are probably no different, then, than those existing in any school system in the nation. The complexity of the reading process and the failure of proper instructional techniques to interpret this process to all children can be expected. The severity of the problem, however, does vary from system to system, depending upon the effort and the attention given to this phase of the curriculum. The problem in Southampton County was severe, a situation that became quite obvious from the results of efforts being conducted at the secondary level under an Emergency School Appropriations Program project conducted in the spring of 1971. As part of that program, all secondary school students in Grades 10,11, and 12 were administered the California Reading Tests -- Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

(California Test Bureau, Copyright 1969). The results of the post-test are given below in Table 1:

Table 1: Secondary Reading Test Results

| Stanine | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 3 | 7 | 16 |
| 8 | 1 | 5 | 9 |
| 7 | 7 | 9 | 21 |
| 6 | 13 | 27 | 26 |
| 5 | 27 | 53 | 31 |
| 4 | 46 | 35 | 27 |
| 3 | 44 | 46 | 25 |
| 2 | 33 | 18 | 12 |
| 1 | 21 | 10 | 4 |
| MEAN | 3.6 | 4.4 | 5.1 |

As can be noted, the results are given in stanines, since grade level equivalents are seldom used to interpret results at the higher grade levels. The mean stanine of the norming population for the test used is 5, thus indicating that in Southampton High School, the 10th grade group fell 1.4 points below the mean, the 11th grade group fell .6 points below the mean, and the 12th grade group scored at the mean. If the norm mean is taken as an indication of on-grade reading performance, the conclusion can be drawn that 146 10th graders, 109 11th graders, and 76 12th graders were performing below grade level or that a total of 331 (56%) of the secondary school students were encountering reading difficulty.

With the above results as an impetus, coupled with the knowledge that no definite written reading instructional program was being utilized and that continuous in-service education activities are a continuing need, it was decided to develop a co-ordinated program for all elementary teachers in the system. Authorities in reading agree that in-service education can be perceived as a mean for improving basic instructional practice, such as differentiating student assignments, selection of materials, and motivating children to read, as well as a means for teacher self-knowledge of content.

To these ends, and based upon implied need, a coordinated and integrated program was planned for the school year 1971-72, involving total elementary instructional personnel. The program was a joint operation, working in conjunction with the University of Virginia School of Continuing Education, Title I auspices, and the State Department of Education. This program was planned to provide two major elements including (a) survey and evaluation, and (b) in-service training, including staff training sessions and formal classes.

Objectives

The primary objective of the coordinated reading program was concerned with improving

the educational expertise of all elementary teachers, particularly in the areas of reading and related language arts. Obviously, this objective was aimed toward the improvement of the teaching of reading skills in the classroom and, ultimately, improved reading achievement levels of all pupils. Secondary objectives were as follows:

1. To acquaint teachers with the various optional approaches to learning, particularly the language experience approach.
2. To orient teachers toward child-centered, developmental, and differentiated curriculum planning.
3. To demonstrate the most effective techniques of teaching, including experience-centered and individualized approaches.
4. To instill an awareness of the vast array of materials available, both within and without the classroom, and to demonstrate proper utilization.
5. To redirect the philosophies of the instructional staff toward meeting the needs of all students.

Survey and Evaluation

In order to be more specific about objectives, to more justifiably discuss needs with the staff, and to provide an analysis of reading achievement for the entire system, the status of the reading of every pupil needed to be ascertained. It was desired that this status survey include not only an overall grade level picture but also a breakdown of reading skills. Furthermore, the status needed to be stated in terms of potential as well as achievement, thus allowing the system to have, as nearly as possible within testing limitations, the answers to these major questions:

1. What is the reading potential of every elementary school child?
2. What is the reading achievement of every elementary school child?
3. Where, and to what degree, do the potential and achievement levels vary significantly for each child?
4. What is the median reading potential at each grade level in the system and in each school?
5. What is the median reading achievement at each grade level in the system and in each school?
6. Where, and to what degree, do the median potential and median achievement levels at each grade level in the system and in each school vary significantly?

and from the preceding questions - what could the reading in-service program provide for the teachers that would aid in eliminating the variations and thereby improve the reading skill of every child?

## The Testing Program

Standardized tests were administered in late September to every child in the elementary schools to determine potential and achievement. The results of these pre-tests were summarized for the system by late October and the results utilized in planning the in-service and instructional activities for the school year. Results were also made available on a classroom and school basis so that the teachers could utilize the results. A parallel form of the pre-test was employed as a post-test in late April and the results of the two testing patterns were analyzed to determine the efficacy of the in-service program and to measure the reading improvement made during the school year. These first-year results are presented in Table 2.

The testing instrument selected was the Durrell Listening - Reading Series, copyright

1969, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. This series includes two phases: (a) Listening Test which determines the reading capacity or potential in both vocabulary and paragraph meaning: and (b) Reading Test which determines the actual reading achievement in the same areas, Form DE was utilized for the pre-test and Form EF for the post-test.

The In-Service Training Program

Beginning in August with the pre-school conference, efforts were made to encourage all elementary personnel to acquaint themselves more thoroughly with the objectives of the reading program, the needs of their pupils, and the materials available for instruction. It was planned that the first semester's major emphasis would be upon child development techniques and individualized instructional patterns, accompanied by considerable review of the reading process. Sessions at the pre-school conference included the highlighting of the efforts for the year, a review of the elementary reading needs as revealed in the secondary survey, discussions and presentations of relative material, and large group sessions with selected consultants.

Training Sessions

Recognizing that in-service programs must be an integral part of the teacher's daily activities, in-school training sessions were planned for each month. The technique utilized was that of providing released time for the teachers by organizing support teams to relieve the teachers.

These support teams, consisting primarily of graduate students from the University of Virginia, took over the management of the classrooms for a period of two hours, while the teachers met with consultants. The support team members, although serving primarily as "substitute teachers

did not attempt to merely hold class but planned and conducted enrichment activities in reading and language arts. The consultants conducted training sessions on a variety of topics, all planned to meet the objectives as stated previously. They were also given additional time to visit in the classroom, to demonstrate materials, work with the individual teachers, and to serve as advisors to the principals. It should be noted that one major concern of the training sessions in the fall and in the spring was to interpret the test results. A list of the topics covered included:

Tests and Measurement
Individualized Instruction

Test Interpretation
Child Development Theory
The Total Reading Program

The Language Arts Program
Creative Approaches to Language Arts

Basal Reading Materials
The Language Arts Program

Enrichment and Supplemental
Reading Materials

The Humanistic Approach

Audiovisual Aids in the Reading
Program

Phonics in the Reading Program
Vocabulary Development

Reading Diagnosis

Group Dynamics

## Formal Class Sessions

Concurrent with the training session during the first semester, a graduate level class, Education 108B: Problems in Teaching Reading, was offered through the auspices of the University of Virginia School of Continuing Education. Recognizing the vital need of involving all personnel in the total program, the course was required and all teachers participated. The course was concerned with a review of the reading program, diagnosis of reading difficulties, child development techniques, and individualized instructional techniques. Resource personnel from various institutions were utilized and the topics

integrated with both the training sessions and the total objectives. The major project, in addition to the usual graduate course requirements, consisted of an individual case study by each teacher. These case studies aided in demonstrating the practicability of the child development and mental measurement approach to reading problems.

As has been noted previously, Southampton County had not been following a definite course of study as a base for the reading program. Although some direction was given, each teacher followed her own dictates as to a reading program, relying heavily upon the material outlined in the basal reader he was following. Since the lack of a co-ordinated and sequential program has been noted by such authorities as Otto and others, it was decided to make the development of a reading curriculum guide for the elementary schools of Southampton County a major project for the second semester. Again utilizing the auspices of the University of Virginia, a course was organized for the second semester, Education 126: Elementary Reading Curriculum. The class was organized by school centers, with each center expected to proceed through the intracacies of curriculum development. Each teacher was expected to contribute her thoughts as to the skills to be taught at her grade level. A coordinator was assigned to each center and resource consultants were provided as requested by the group. Multiple reading materials, texts, curriculum guides and other relative materials were provided as aids to the work. Curriculum development is, of course, an on-going thing, and staff involvement is essential but slows the process. The curriculum was not completed at the end of the first year, but the initial stages of philosophy and objective development had been reached.

## Evaluation of the Total Effort

As was described previously, the program called for an end of the year evaluation to

be conducted in the form of a pre- and post- standardized test. It was realized at the beginning that such a formal evaluation would not reveal a complete analysis of what would be accomplished. Such a procedure, nevertheless, would reveal classroom progress as one basis for a judgment criterion. Also, as previously noted, such a testing procedure would also serve the purpose of identifying children with severe reading disability, both individually, for each school, and for the system as a whole. The Durrell-Listening Reading Series was administered accordingly, Form DE being used in the fall and Form EF in the spring.

The following table indicate the median grade equivalent for each grade level as indicated. A grade equivalent is the grade interpretation of the relationship of a given raw score to the actual grade placement. The most valid use of the grade equivalent is in the median (the point that divides the group into two equal parts) performance of a group of students. Grade equivalent medians are shown for vocabulary potential, sentence achievement, and total potential, vocabulary achievement, sentence achievement, and total reading achievement. The differential indicates the discrepancy between the total language potential and the actual reading achievement. Table 2 shows the median scores for the entire division, with a differential also indicated on this table of the discrepancy between reading achievement and actual grade placement.

Comparing Potential Reading Grade Equivalent with Actual Reading Grade Equivalent

A comparison of the two measures will answer the following questions:

(1) Are any children in this group limited in reading because of lack of understanding of spoken language?

(2) At what reading level can a child understand spoken language?

(3) How far above reading grade is each child's listening comprehension?

(4) Among pupils who are candidates for remedial reading instruction, which have the highest learning potential?

Comparing the Child's Actual Reading Grade Equivalent with his Current Grade Placement

The Actual Reading Grade Equivalent on the Reading Test will indicate:

(1) Which pupils are achieving much above grade level and need instructional programs to match their superior reading achievement,

(2) Which pupils are reading below grade level and need instructional programs below the usual level for the grade,

(3) Which pupils are seriously retarded in reading, needing intensive remedial programs.

MEDIAN SCORES (50th Percentile)

TABLE 2: Division Summary

| | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | 6 | | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre* | Post** | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post |
| Vocab Pot | 1.4 | 2.2 | 2.5 | 3.0 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 5.0 | 4.8 | 5.8 | 6.0 | 6.7 |
| Sent Pot | 1.4 | 1.9 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 4.4 | 4.6 | 5.0 |
| Total Pot | 1.4 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.7 | 3.6 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 5.3 | 5.8 | 6.5 |
| Vocab Ach | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 4.3 | 4.2 | 5.1 | 5.7 |
| Sent Ach | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 3.8 | 3.7 | 5.0 | 4.5 | 5.0 |
| Total Ach | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 4.5 | 4.9 | 5.5 |
| Test Diff. | -.1 | -.8 | -.9 | -.8 | -.4 | -.6 | -.5 | -.8 | -.6 | -.8 | -.4 | -.8 | -.9 | -1.0 |
| G.P. Diff. | +.1 | =.3 | -.7 | -.6 | -.9 | -1.1 | -1.5 | -1.8 | -2.2 | -2.2 | -2.2 | -2.2 | -2.3 | -2.3 |

*Pre-test: Administered in September, 1971
**Post-test: Administered in April, 1972

Further analysis of the pre- and post- test results indicate the total number of children in the system who were reading below grade level at the time the test was given. It is realized that the potential of the children must be the primary gauge by which reading success is measured. Nevertheless, in a school system that has traditionally followed the graded system of organization, comparison of achievement to grade placement remains the standard of performance.

Table 3: Pupils Below Grade Level

| | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | 6 | | 7 | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | | |
| Pre-Test | 264 | 73 | 346 | 85 | 413 | 96 | 410 | 96 | 352 | 88 | 304 | 85 | 283 | 86 | 2372 | 88 |
| Post-Test | 319 | 89 | 309 | 77 | 398 | 94 | 396 | 93 | 328 | 84 | 282 | 82 | 283 | 91 | 2315 | 87 |

## Preliminary Conclusions from Pre-Test Results

On the basis of the information contained in the above tables, several pertinent conclusions were drawn in the fall and used for planning the in-service efforts.

1. Systemwide, the children enter the first grades with language potential adequate to meet the challenge of first grade work in reading; (Table 2, Grade 1 potential).
2. This potential is not realized, however, and a rather severe differential begins to appear at the second grade level; (Table2 , Grade 2 achievement).
3. The differential tends to level off to a less severe level in the intermediate

grades but then reappears at the seventh grade; (Table2 , Grades 3-7 differential).

4. The potential and reading achievement scores show a corresponding dropping away from actual grade placement; (Table 2, Grades 2-7 G.P. differential).
5. Beyond the first grade, actual achievement in reading falls as much as two grades below placement; (Table 2 , Grades 2-7 achievement).
6. All schools show a similar potential with no single school, or grade, differing markedly;
7. Although the tables show only the median, the results indicate a similarity of achievement, as well as a similar diffential;
8. A comparison of the vocabulary potential with the sentence potential shows that the latter begins to drop more rapidly as the child progresses through the grades. This tends to be true with achievement also;
9. The percentage of children reading below grade level is alarmingly high, in view of the overall potential.

## Preliminary Recommendations

From the pre-test results, as well as from information gleaned from classroom visitations by consultants and support-team members, and from initial contacts with teachers, the following recommendations were made.

1. It was obvious that the absence of a sequential, well-planned guide for the reading program hindered a coordinated plan to cope with the teaching of reading and a major recommendation was that efforts be made to develop such a guide.

2. The high precentage of children not reading on grade level throughout the system made obvious the need for differentiated and diversified multi-level materials and attention was drawn to the need to use care in the distribution of reading materials.

3. The fact that the potential was not being reached for many children led to a recommendation that efforts be made to encourage each teacher to carefully assess the needs of each child and to plan individualized reading programs.

4. It was further recommended that teachers attempt to use a more creative and flexible approach and that the classroom atmosphere be made more appealing to the learner.

5. The teachers in the system, although professional as a group, needed to be more aware of the newest methods, materials, and techniques and it was suggested that increased provision be made for this type of professional growth.

Conclusions from Post-Test Results

On the basis of the information contained in the above table several pertinent conclusions were drawn as to progress made during the first year, based upon a comparison of the two sets of results.

1. Systemwide, at all grade levels and in all schools, the potential had shown a predictable increase. During the six month period between the pre- and post- tests, the potential showed an average median increase for the system of .61. Furthermore, the differential between actual grade placement and potential had lessoned (the mean differential was now .5, compared to .7 last fall).

2. Systemwide, again at all grade levels and, except at one school, the reading achievement had shown an increase, although not at the same level as the potential, the average median increase for the six month period was .34, with a range in the various grades of .01 (no increase) to .89 (a full year).

3. The normative increase in potential, with the slower increase in reading achievement, had contributed to the fact that a wide differential still exists, systemwide, between potential and achievement, with an average median differential of .9 compared to .5 in the fall.

4. The differential between achievement and actual grade placement had been stabilized and showed no appreciable change from fall.

5. Again, as in the fall, the results showed a remarkable continuity from school to school, and, again, no school or grade differed markedly from the division pattern.

6. A comparison of the vocabulary potential achievement with sentence achievement indicated a decidedly higher increase in sentence achievement (.6, compared to .3).

7. A comparison of the vocabulary potential with sentence potential indicates the reverse of the above statement in that vocabulary potential showed the greatest increase (.8 compared to .4).

Summation and Recommendations for Further Growth during the Second Year

The coordinated reading program was able to bring to the elementary teachers of Southampton County a number of experiences that represented the more positive approaches taken today toward instructional improvement: Systemized and standardized evaluation, formal graduate classes, regularized consultative aid, and

demonstration of material and technique. This wealth of resources had been expected to produce a substantial improvement in the overall reading achievement. Such improvement did not take place, however, if one judges by total median number of months improvement. The instructional period between pre- and post-testing periods was six months and a gain of at least six months in achievement would be expected. Actual gain, as shown by the tests was approximately three and one-half months, or much less that normally expected. A closer analysis was essential, therefore, to hypothesize what did occur. A gain of over six months in potential does indicate that the programs did have a positive effect.

It was difficult to measure many of the improvements that were observed in the reading practices of the system. Although the gain was slight, there was an improvement in reading achievement in every grade level and in every school, with the exception of one grade level in one school. The system was then, showing a stablizing effect in that the drop in achievement as in post years had been slowed. The atmosphere in the classroom, with the obvious profound interest of the teachers, and the more flexible attitude toward instruction, was noticable although not measured. Furthermore, teachers were looking forward with a more positive outlook. They knew that the children had the potential and were excited about meeting the challenge. What of the future? What improvements were most obviously needed? How could the in-service program be improved. Where should the priorities in reading be directed? The following recommendations were made in the belief that the proper efforts will allow the essential improvement to take place.

1. The development of the reading curriculum guide should continue. It is essential that teachers have a clear understanding as to the goals of an

instructional program and how these goals effect the desired outcomes. In the reading program, for example, there are any number of sets of skills that are suggested for mastery at a particular point or, indeed, even included at all. One series of basal readers might emphasize phonics as an essential tool to reading, while another series may follow another approach. The approach that Southampton County wishes to follow in the teaching of reading should be developed cooperatively and in terms of the needs of the pupils in the system. The lack of this systemized program has created confusion among the teachers as to direction and has had a negative effect upon individual reading success. The teachers have produced a workable philosophy and a set of general objectives. The next steps will include a study of the skills and outcomes desired for each grade level, and a review of the materials and techniques essential to gaining those outcomes. After the program has been produced, it will be subject to modification as it is followed and the classroom results are observed. This is a long-term process and it must be recognized that short-term results cannot be expected to show any startling increase in reading achievement. This curriculum development aspect will be building a foundation upon which long range improvement will be projected.

2. The formal evaluation program, as described previousiy, should be continued. The standardized test results, as presented, were revealing and did show the reading problem in a clear fashion. It is recognized that there are several limitations of standardized tests that must be considered before making judgments of the results reported. The test was a group test; it was given under strict time limits; and the results are standardized to

national norms. Nevertheless, as a survey, the fact remains that the tests, both pre- and post- indicate a severe reading problem in the system as a whole. Such a revealing situation should not, however, be regarded as totally negative. The object of the testing program was to assess the efficacy of the present instructional pattern and to uncover the facts as they might exist. This was accomplished and the results used to plan constructively for program improvement. Continuation of the testing program will permit a continuous assessment of the program of the system as a whole, at each grade level and for each school. Although the test is a group-survey type, the individual results will also allow teachers to continue studying individual results to determine both progress and individual need.

3. The in-service training program, both the resource consultant phase and the formal class phase should be continued. These efforts should be of a nature that will have more direct effect in the classroom. The work completed during the past year was of a generalized nature, in which the teachers did benefit from expert knowledge of a formative fashion. Topics covered can now serve as a base for reading skill instruction, with more emphasis upon teaching technique. Demonstrations for materials, demonstration lessons in the classroom, and consultant help in the classroom would be of value. Teachers have indicated a wish that more visitations to the classroom by consultants be made. These visits might include time to observe the teacher's lesson planning and actual teaching techniques, and to offer suggestions for alternate approaches. The formal class should also be concerned with a practical, workshop-type approach. Topics covered in the class should include the skill building phase of the reading process, emphasis upon extending vocabulary building experience

and teacher participation exercises of material preparation. The resource personnel utilized in the formal class should also be a part of the consultive phase described above, thus aiding in the development of an articulated in-service program.

4. Although much effect has been expended, and a hopeful outlook is apparent, the tremendous gap between reading achievement and both potential and grade placement cannot be overcome by normative means. Improvement will come from such measures as outlined above but growth will be steady, with little hope of a reading gain that would indicate that the children are reading grade-level material. It is obvious that some type of special and sustained massive effort should be made. There are many possibilities and the literature available describes such techniques as contract learning situations, the utilization of special materials, the utilization of specially trained personnel, and the reorganization of the school structure toward an ungraded approach. Keeping in mind the local resources available, both in staff and material, it behooves the school leadership in Southampton County to develop a special program that will utilize present resources, that will be feasible to conduct, and that can be expected to produce the short-term results desired. It is suggested that a program might be attempted that would include the following features:

   a. The present reading program, utilizing the basal reading materials and reading personnel now available, would be continued. This will provide the basic foundation.

   b. A daily enrichment program, to reinforce basic skills, in addition to the above, would be conducted by all teachers in all schools, using every type of experience and material available.

c. Pupils would be assigned to reading groups on the basis of reading achievement, irregardless of grade placement.

d. Teachers would be assigned to work with these groups in terms of their individual competencies and abilities.

e. Pupil groups would be flexible and pupils would move to another group when, and if, progress so indicated.

Such a program would shorten the amount of time to be spent on the remainder of the curriculum but all education is a matter of priorities and such a program should increase reading abilities to a degree that the total educational program would benefit.

Southampton County Language Arts Enrichment Program

For the school year 1972-73, the effort to provide an optium reading program for the elementary pupils of the Southampton County Public Schools had progressed to an enrichment phase. In addition to the regular reading program as previously followed, with major empahsis upon the basal reader and grade level skills approach, a daily enrichment program was inaugurated. This enrichment phase was to be conducted by every classroom teacher in every school for a one-hour time period (9:00-10:00 a.m.) each day and would employ every type of experience and material available, with the exception of basal readers. It was intended to be flexible in nature, with children assigned to their enrichment groups on the basis of reading achievement, irregardless of actual grade placement.

Major Characteristics. The program was highlighted by the following features:

1. Enrichment: It was hoped that the program would bring to the pupils a tremendous variety of broadening experiences and that every conceivable type of material would be utilized.

2. Flexibility: The program was designed by its very nature to be flexible.

No one approach was suggested nor were certain materials prescribed. Each teacher was to enjoy maximum freedom in experience selection.

3. Individualization: Pupils were assigned to enrichment groups for initial implementation on the basis of reading achievement scores as recorded on the Durrell Listening Reading Series in April. This represented initial placement, however, and pupils were to be shifted to other groups as their language arts instructional needs dictated.

4. Pupil-Centered: Pupils were placed in groups irregardless of grade placement. No number or letter grades were to be assigned but rather anecdotal, periodical written progress reports were to be made. Pupils were not be be judged on arbitrary grade-level skill achievement but upon their language development.

5. Creative and Stimulating: Each teacher was encouraged to provide the most stimulating environment and to utilize the most creative technique at his command. With the exception of the ban upon the basal reader approach during this period, the teachers were to use every type of material available.

6. A-1 Priority: The program was regarded as essential and all of the supervisory and administrative aid possible was to be given. Materials presently available were reorganized and redistributed for maximum utilization.

The central objective was quite clear--present to the pupils of Southampton County an opportunity to develop to their potential in language arts through a program that allowed every teacher to teach children without the traditional restraints.

Premises: The enrichment program, as described above, was an outgrowth of, and was based upon, the following pertinent premises:

1. The present language arts program, in spite of the dedicated efforts of the teachers of the Southampton County Public Schools, a wealth of instructional materials, and the potential of the pupils, was not resulting in sufficient reading achievement and growth. The results of standardized testing conducted during the past two years revealed that over 50% of the secondary students and over 87% of the elementary school students were not reading to grade level. Although it can be debated that grade level standards are arbitrary and should not be used as an evaluative criterion, it must be realized that the Southampton County Public School system was organized as a graded school system and that, without other acceptable criteria, grade standards did remain as the logical basis upon which success must be measured.

2. Southampton County Schools, as pointed out above, were organized in the

traditional, and universally accepted, graded structure. Such a structure is restrictive by nature and quite often results in pupil failure due to the lack of opportunity for individualized instruction and proper instructional materials.

3. The present approach utilized primarily throughout the system was that of the basal reader approach. Utilization of such traditional material is, of course, an educationally sound pattern of instruction. However, over-emphasis and narrow confinement to these materials results, too often, in a stilted and unimaginative routine Furthermore, it becomes difficult if not impossible to meet individual needs through such a restricted reading curriculum.

4. The elementary teachers of the Southampton County Public Schools, working both as a group, and as individual school faculties, had spent considerable time working toward the development of a reading curriculum guide. The accepted philosophy behind this movement had stated that all teachers are indeed teachers of reading and must exert every possible effort toward reading improvement. Furthermore, it was a matter of record that the elementary teachers have expressed their desires for a more flexible, pupil-oriented, and individualized approach.

In summary the enrichment program attempted to incorporate features that emphasized: (a) continuous progress rather than the graded structure; (b) a wealth of materials and techniques rather than the basal approach; (c) total staff involvement in language arts rather than specialized teachers: and (d) an enriched and stimulating environment rather than a restricted and inflexible pattern.

## The 1972-73 Program

On the basis of the survey and evaluation results for 1971-72, and the point to which the in-service activities had evolved, four recommendations for 1972-73 were made:

1. The development of a Reading Curriculum Guide should continue.

2. The Evaluation and Survey Program of testing reading achievement should continue.

3. The In-Service Training Program should continue.

4. A Language Arts Enrichment Program should be established.

These recommendations were accepted and the program conducted in 1972-73 attempted to fuse these items into the total coordinated effort.

The Reading Curriculum Guide

Quoting from Kimball Wiles' Supervision For Better Schools (Prentice Hall, 1967), curriculum means many things: the concept that exists in the minds of the staff; the design and structure of the curriculum plan; the organization of the curriculum that is described in curriculum bulletins and guides; the instructional materials used: the beliefs about the educational process; and the experiences provided for the children. Unfortunately, many school systems have little in the way of guides or courses of study that spell out the details of the above. Believing that an essential task in reading improvement is the development of such a curriculum guide, the teachers, both in faculty groups and specific committees, developed a guide that can now be used as a flexible base for the reading program. As a cooperative effort, it reflects the philosophy and orientation of the teachers of Southampton County. This was a major project and will prove to have a significant long-range effect on reading improvement. The guide will need to be handled flexibly and reflect changes in philosophy as it is utilized.

The Evaluation and Survey Program

Evaluation and appraisal of any undertaking must be a continuous process in order that the degree of success can be measured. The testing instrument utilized in this program continues to be the Durrell Listening-Reading Series, copyright 1969, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc. This series includes two phases: (a) Listening Test which determines the reading capacity or potential in both vocabulary and

paragraph meaning; and (b) Reading Test which determines the actual reading achievement in the same areas. Witn the testing program in its second year of operation, a sequence has now been developed in that the spring testing results not only serve as an evaluative or post-test measure for that year but also become the initial appraisal or pre-test measure for the coming year. The results of the pre-test (April 1972) results and the post-test (April 1973) are presented herewith in tabular form.

MEDIAN SCORES (50th Percentile)

TABLE 4: Division Summary

| | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | 6 | | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Pre | **Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post |
| Vocab Pot | 1.6 | 2.7 | 2.2 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 5.2 | 5.0 | 6.3 | 5.8 | 6.5 |
| Sent Pot | 1.6 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 2.8 | 2.6 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 3.6 | 5.1 | 4.4 | 5.2 |
| Total Pot | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 4.0 | 3.7 | 4.7 | 4.3 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 6.4 |
| Vocab Ach | 1.0 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 4.9 | 4.2 | 6.0 |
| Sent Ach | 1.1 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 2.1 | 1.9 | 3.0 | 2.6 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 4.5 | 3.8 | 5.6 | 5.0 | 5.8 |
| Total Ach | 1.0 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 2.8 | 2.6 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 3.9 | 3.5 | 5.2 | 4.5 | 6.1 |
| Test Diff | -.6 | -.9 | -.8 | -.7 | -.8 | -.5 | -.6 | -.9 | -.8 | -.8 | -.8 | -.6 | -.8 | -.3 |
| G.P. Diff | -.8 | -.2 | -.4 | -.5 | -.6 | -1.0 | -1.2 | -1.7 | -1.9 | -1.9 | -2.3 | -1.6 | -2.3 | -1.7 |

*Pre-test: Administered in April, 1972
**Post-Test: Administered in April, 1973

The In-Service Training Program

Beginning in August with the pre-school conference, efforts were made to encourage all teachers in the system, both elementary and secondary, to be concerned with the total reading program and to study the various grade level expectancies. It was recognized from the beginning that much work needed to be directed toward curriculum development. Sessions at the pre-school conference included the highlighting of the efforts for the year, a review of reading needs, and small group sessions in which relevant material was presented.

Using the conference as an impetus for the beginning of the school year, it was recognized that formal class work would be essential to continuous stimulation and professional growth. Two graduate level courses were offered during the first semester through the auspices of the University of Virginia School of Continuing Education. The first of these, GS Education 164: Reading in Elementary Schools, was offered as an extension of the work previously covered in the Elementary School Reading Curriculum course offered in the Spring of 1972. The course was concerned with finalizing the philosophy, grade level skills, objectives and developing informal reading inventories. The second course Education 129: Teaching of Reading in the Secondary Schools was offered in recognition of the fact that the reading effort is a unitary matter that should include attention at all grade levels. The formal course work was continued through the Spring of 1973 with GS Education 125: Creative Materials for the Teaching of Reading as the offering. This course was designed to review the materials and techniques essential to a multi-sensory experience approach to reading, with much teacher participation. The culminating in-service activity of the year consisted of an exhibit of the materials produced during the semester, including a comprehensive display of teacher-made materials. The exhibit was widely attended and should serve as an impetus to future activity. It

should be noted that consultants and resource persons also visited the individual schools at regular intervals, providing assistance and suggestions as requested.

The Language Arts Enrichment Program

Perhaps the most unique effort to improve elementary reading achievement was the establishment of an enrichment program. It was recognized that Southampton County was faced with several problem situations.

1. The present median achievement was substantially behind potential.
2. Median yearly gain in achievement was much less than could be normally expected.
3. There was a wide range in teacher competency and reading teaching efficiency.
4. Funds were not available for a massive introduction of different reading material.
5. The backgrounds and language experiences of the pupils varied greatly.

After considerable planning and deliberation, it was decided that an enrichment program, with the following salient features, would be a worthwhile attempt to counter the problems listed above:

1. The skills of all teachers must be utilized and shared with as many pupils as possible.
2. Provision must be made to provide a flexible and creative program, utilizing all available resources.
3. The grade level idea must be transcended, with children who need similar skill instruction being grouped together.
4. Groupings must be flexible, with pupils reassigned as the needs change and skills are developed.
5. Every available type of aid that will extend language experience should be utilized.

6. The pupils need to be involved in self-evaluation and made aware of the vital necessity of becoming a good reader.
7. Skills must continue to be emphasized and the regular reading program extended.

The program was initiated in September 1972. It should be kept in mind that a number of steps were involved, including:

1. Organization of the evaluative test results as a basis to grouping.
2. Evaluation of teacher competency as a basis for assigning groups.
3. Re-distribution of available materials to aid instruction.
4. Planning administrative details including re-grouping, time schedules, and supervision.
5. Informing School Board members and parents of the plan.
6. Orientation and preparation of the teaching staff to the necessity and possible outcomes.
7. Provision of consultant assistance when requested.

## Summary and Conclusions

The Southampton County Coordinated Reading Program, after two years, can only be regarded with optimism and pride of accomplishment. The children are evidencing a greater degree of reading achievement, the teachers have participated in a number of worthwhile in-service activities, a system-wide curriculum guide for the reading program has been developed, and the administrative staff continues to be enthusiastic in its efforts to meet the challenge of meeting every individual child's needs. Although standardized tests do represent only one measure of evaluation, they, nevertheless, are a most important means of appraisal. The test results presented previously reveal promising

and pleasing results and several pertinent conclusions can be drawn:

1. Systemwide, at all grade levels, and in all schools, the potential has shown a predictable increase. During the ten month period between the pre and post-tests, the potential shows an average median increase for the system of 9.3 months.

2. Systemwide, again at all grade levels, and in all schools, the reading achievement has shown the normally expected increase. The average median increase for the system was 10 months, compared to 5.7 months during the previous ten months. This represents a remarkable increase of reading achievement efficiency of 86%.

3. The range of increase in reading achievement for the division was from 5 months (4th Grade) to 1.7 yrs. (6th Grade).

4. The median differential between potential and achievement was 7.3 months during the previous testing period indicating that the children has the potential to achive at a much higher rate than was accomplished. This median differential is now 6.7 months, indicating that the children of Southampton County, as a group, are still not reading to potential, the major goal of any reading program. However, they have narrowed the gap by 6 months. The potential, in other words, has continued to emerge under the flexible conditions of the enrichment hour and this presents a challenge to the teachers.

5. The increased reading achievement is most noticable at Grades 5,6, and 7 with substantial gains of 1.0, 1.7, and 1.6 years, respectfully. This is a positive factor in that the children will be entering the junior high with much improved reading skills for the content areas.

6. The reading achievement did not show as much improvement in Grades 1,2,3, and 4, indicating that more attention needs to be given to basic reading skills. Analysis of the individual test results reveals weaknesses in both listening and vocabulary areas.

As noted, test results are limited in scope, but do provide a definite basis of comparison from one year to the next. Less formal evaluation and systematic observation can be made.

1. The atmosphere in the classrooms is generally less stilted and is more flexible, allowing for more individual growth.

2. A greater variety of materials, with more creative utilization is in evidence in the classrooms and on the bulletin boards.

3. The teaching staff, in general, is more concerned with the progress of each child and is taking the time to study individuals.

4. The teaching staff, again in general, is more knowledgeable concerning the skills and techniques of reading and is using objectives as a basis for evaluation.

5. The graded concept still exists but there is a tendency to take each child where he is and to provide an instructional program to suit his needs.

6. The administrative staff is not satisfied with the gains made and realizes that the potential is still not being reached. Further efforts will be forthcoming, with more direct faculty input, and an on-going and continuous program is envisioned.

## Recommendations for Further Growth

I. The Enrichment Program. It is strongly urged that the language arts enrichment hour be continued. The gains made in reading achievement, although due to many related factors, can be linked directly to the broadening and stimulating activities that were presented every morning in every classroom to every child. It is planned that a second year will be included in the overall improvement plan so that more definite judgments can be made. Modifications of the following nature are suggested:

1. The range of reading achievements and chronological ages should be narrowed. This could be accomplished by allowing the teachers of certain levels to conduct the enrichment program with their own homerooms. It is suggested that this be done at Grades 1-3 and Grade 7. Grades 4-6 should be cross-graded as before; the programs for Grades 1-3 and Grade 7 are unique in themselves. The primary program is one of basic skill development while the seventh grade program should be oriented to content and junior high goals.

2. The variety of activities conducted during the enrichment program should be extended and should draw upon content areas as a source of context.

3. The types of activities, materials and experiences utilized during the enrichment hour should be reviewed by the staff and reconstituted for the year so as to avoid duplication and repetition. Specific times should be set aside for planning and exchange of ideas among members of the teaching staff.

4. Attention should be given to the importance and necessity of using the enrichment hour to reinforce reading skills.

5. It is impossible for the central staff to provide adequate daily supervision of this program in each school. This task must become the responsibility of the on-site administrator. This must be more than mere inspection; rather, it should be a carefully planned and sequential program of supervision. Objectives for every lesson must be formulated in the light of overall goals and the administration must see that the objectives are evaluated.

II. The Assessment Program. The testing program will be continued. Not only have the results been utilized as a measure of evaluating the progress made in reading achievement, but in addition, they have served as a major incentive to the teachers. The continuation of this program will allow an on-going appraisal of success. For 1973-74, the beginning first graders and all children new to the system, as well as any children whose records reveal incomplete or questionable test results should be tested in September, with all children being tested in April. The spring (1974) results can again be used to determine the efficiency of the overall effort in improving reading skills.

III. The In-Service Program. The sequential program of teacher training that was begun in 1971 will be continued and expanded to include all members of the secondary level teaching staff. It is suggested that provisions be made for consultants and resource personnel to continue work with the teachers in improving all phases of the reading program, including visitations during the enrichment hour. In addition to consultant visitations, the following activities should be considered:

1. As stated previously, it is essential that each building principal be given more responsibility for the supervision and coordination of the reading program. This type of leadership will provide a constant resource for the teachers, as well as to assure coordination of efforts at the school level. Such leadership capabilities must be developed and a course "Organization and Administration of Reading Programs" is available and will be offered in 1973-74.

2. Principals are charged with the primary responsibility of administering the schools, carrying out School Board policy; however, the instructional program must not be neglected. This dual role of administering and supervising requires that consideration be given for provision of additional help. will be outstanding reading teacher from each school designated as a reading resource person and that this person will be delegated the responsibility of aiding the principal with the coordination of the program. This person be able to facilitate the sharing of ideas and materials and to work closely with each teacher. These teachers should be participants in the class for administrators noted above.

3. The secondary reading program, grades 8-12, has traditionally been the responsibility of the English teachers, if indeed a program exists. This is no longer an accepted pattern and provisions for reading improvement are now regarded as an integral part of the secondary curriculum. In order to assure an orderly transition from the elementary level to the junior high level, and to emphasize that reading instruction should be available at all levels, provision will be made to provide training in reading techniques for secondary teachers. A course, "Teaching of Reading in the Content Areas" is available and will be offered during 1973-74.

IV. The Communication Program. The reading improvement program in Southampton County has been carefully planned, is unique in its structure, and has resulted in a significant rise in achievement levels. School Board members have been kept informed of the progress, as well as parents to a lesser degree. There has also been some coverage of the program activities through the media.

These efforts to provide publicity and communicate progress will be continued and expanded. Newspaper accounts, periodical bulletins, summary reports to parents, P.T.A. programs, and related activities will be utilized to emphasize the importance of the reading program. A staff member will be delegated this specific responsibility and encouraged to provide such a continuous and sequential service. As the reading program continues to grow in Southampton County, it is necessary that documentation be made. Therefore, an on-going file will be kept of events and communication releases as they occur.

V. The Materials and Experience Program. Throughout the reading program as organized since 1971, there have been no special or unique materials adopted for the entire county. This has been an outgrowth of the philosophy of the consultant coordinators who believe that sound reading instruction must be based upon teacher competency and that the creative teacher will select and provide those materials most needed. In view of the reading achievement gain, as noted in the tables of results, this belief has been justified. The time has come, however, when added efforts in material utilization are essential if the gains are to be reinforced. Again, no special ideological type is suggested, such as Psycho-Technics or Distar, but the teachers need to be made more aware of the value of turning every classroom into a learning laboratory; a zoological garden or a miniature Smithsonian Institute is not envisioned, but there remain classrooms that are void of interest centers, sensory material collections, live flora and fauna, and similar concrete learning material.

Budgetary provision will be made for such items in order that this realia approach be more easily implemented. Furthermore, teachers need to become more aware of the valuable experiences to be had by extending the classroom activities into the community. Some teachers in some schools do arrange class visitations to such immediate available resources as a local drugstore, bank, post office, bakery, or grocery store, but the number of such activities are limited. There are first grade teachers, for example, who lament the lack of background and vocabulary of the new first graders, but who simply do not take the trouble to arrange experiences that would be invaluable for these children.

Each school will develop a resource handbook of experiences and resources that are available in that school community and the principals

will insist that the teachers utilize this tool as the classroom activities and objectives of the overall program demand.

## Epilogue

What Southampton County has accomplished in reading improvement can be paralleled in any school division that is willing to place priority on this phase of learning. The Key factors include leadership, dedicated teachers, open-minded evaluation, flexibility of instruction, and the creative utilization of experiences. Furthermore, the responsibility for the instructional program must remain in the hands of the classroom teacher in cooperation with the entire instructional staff, with every possible resource made available for daily use.